

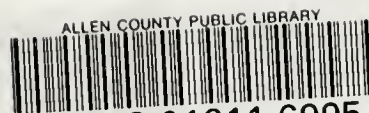
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Ingersoll, William M.  
Ingersoll family

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' In '

Ingersoll family

Letters from  
William Ingersoll  
and  
Alice L. Ingersoll

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785 Kearney St., Denver, Colorado, Sunday, Sept. 1, 1929

Dear Mrs. Bigsby:

Your letter came a day or two ago, and to my great joy, Mr. Ingersoll has answered most of your questions.

You see, we were married August 28, 1870, and did not go to live on the old Kanwaka Farm till our first child was born in October, 1872. He (our son, Charles) was born in the old log house, which has since fallen down, but the stone part was built the summer before.

You are right in thinking your Aunt Mary Topping could tell you many details of that early time, and it is too bad you can not get in touch with her. She has not been in Denver this summer, that I know of, but if in Colorado, I hope she will come to us.

I do not know the date on the old stone school-house nor who was the first teacher, but I know Miss Susan Faxon, an old classmate of mine in the Emporia Normal School, was one of the early teachers. If you can find Susan Platt, (I forget her married name), she might tell you some of the early history of Kanwaka, as her father, Aaron Platt, was one of the first settlers. I taught school there one term, about 1881. Alma Richardson taught there the summer before, I think. She was a graduate of K.U. and a very fine teacher. There never was a Post Office in Kanwaka, in our time.

Three graves of members of the Ingersoll family are on the hillside above the little creek south of the old stone house. One was of Grandfather Franklin Sawyer; one of Mr. Charles Ingersoll, Sr., who was shot by John Blunt, a negro employed by Mr. Ingersoll, and last - Baby Edith Ingersoll, 10-months old. I tried to find the graves, when in



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Kanwaka three years ago, but could not locate them. Mr. Ingersoll thinks he could find them but I am lacking in that particular sense.

We know nothing about the killing of David Buffam.

The old California Trail followed the road east of the house, westward to Fort Kearney, Nebraska, where it joined the Oregon Trail going toward the Pacific Coast. The early immigrants followed the streams with their ox teams for water was pre-eminently a necessity. Lack of water, too often, meant death, and they say every foot of ground travelled by those early pioneers has had an unmarked grave. And yet, "Westward Ho" has been the slogan for years. From the "Covered Wagon" to the airplane, you trace the progress of civilization.

My dear, if we have helped you in writing your paper, we will be most thankful, for I can never forget the hospitality of your husband and yourself when I was visiting Mrs. LeVett.

Yours truly,

(Signed) Alice L. Ingersoll



Denver, Colorado,  
Sept. 1, 1929

Dear Mrs. Bixby:

I received your letter of August 28th and have been so busy that I have not been able to answer until now; and I will try to answer your questions in rotation as I read them.

My father and the rest of the family came to Kanwaka in 1859 and were quartered for a time at the old Judge Wakefield stone house until the old log house on our home place was made comfortable, and there we lived through the winter of 1859 and as the place did not prove to be so comfortable and we all suffered from the cold, as the winter of '59 was a hard one, and in the spring my mother went back to Mass., and she did not return until 1865, about the time of the close of the Civil War, and my grandfather Sawyer came back with her. He was my mother's father. He was then 87.

Mr. Sawyer had no position with the Govt. In his younger days, he was a building contractor in Boston and, at one time, was considered a very wealthy man for the times. He built the custom house at New Orleans and shipped the granite from Maine by sea.. He was one of the promoters of the Bunker Hill monument and a charter member of the association and we have his certificate of membership containing the names of all the members of the association and I think he looked after the building of the monument. He was a native of Stirling, Mass., and his ancestors came over from England in 1640. He died in 1871, at the age of 94, and was buried on the place which would not have been done if I had been home at the time of his death. He stood over 6-ft. in his stockings and was the most venerable man I ever saw at the time of his death. His hair and beard were long and as fine as silk with hair curled at the ends.







My father was a native of New York City and my mother was a native of Cambridge, Mass., born not far from Harvard College in one of the old colonial houses on Main St., Cambridge, and I was born in the same house.

My father was a graduate of Columbia College and the Harvard Law School and after graduation from the latter he studied 3 years under Judge Story, one of the prominent Judges of the time, and his specialty was contracts.

Few lawyers of the present time have the finished education for the practice of the law that he had.

During the Civil War, he was connected with the Contract Office of the P.O. Dept. in Washington, but resigned in 1865 and came to live on old Kanwaka Farm.

He bought the greater section where we lived outright and also the Hurd place, east of the old home, but I know little about either transaction as he always kept his business affairs to himself.

I do not remember ever going to school in Kanwaka, but I have a dim recollection of a school somewhere that was taught by the youngest daughter of the Rev. John S. Brown who was once a County Supt. of Schools for Douglas County.

I went back east for my school days and lived in Fitchburg, Mass. before 1865, and graduated from the High School there. My recollection is the old California Trail passed our place about where the present road is located.

The stone portion of our house was built about '72 but I was away from home at the time and did not pay much attention to it. Do not know who <sup>did</sup> the work. Jo Raymond did the carpenter Work and the stone for



the building was quarried right near the house.

I do not remember anything about school matters and the old Kanwaka School and who were the pupils, but Mrs. Ingersoll may know something of interest.

I know something about the underground R.R. One station was at the old Heath place and I remember seeing fugitives there. One night in those early days (I can't just place the time), about midnight, John Brown and a party came to our house and waked us all up asking for information as to roads. It was the same party that went with him to Harper's Ferry later.

We had, at that time, a man working for us by the name of Fall. He was quite friendly with the Hurds who, at that time, were living in the quarter east of us. Jake Hurd, a member of the family, made his living "running niggers" back to Missouri. Fall told them about Brown coming there for information and Jake and his associates undertook to follow his party and at Holton, Kansas they corralled the party in a log house in that neighborhood.

As Brown's party was armed with sharps rifles, they were able to stand off Jake's party for a time, and the latter sent and got a small cannon to shoot down the place where the Brown party was located; but before the cannon got to them, Brown's party escaped and were not overtaken and afterwards turned up at Harper's Ferry. I think I have answered most of your questions. If I could talk with you, I could give you lots more information of early times that now is forgotten.

My father came to Kansas independent of the Emigrant Aid Society in 1857, to help make Kansas a free state. I came to Lawrence, March 28th,





1855. Came from St. Louis by steam boat and staged from K.C. to Lawrence.

The names of the family north of us were Donahue and the other was Thompson Wakefield, a son of the old Judge; and, by the way, Thompson Wakefield became a Judge in Central Kansas and died here in Denver several years ago and a daughter was connected, at that time, with the Rocky Mt. News; and his wife is still living so far as I know.

There was quite a long history of his life printed in the Rocky Mt. News at the time of his death and it was colorful enough. I don't think my mother was connected with any circle or club. She seldom went away from home.

I brought my horse stock from Illinois about '78 and '79 and among them the imported French Stallion "Turco". He was imported from France by Russ, McCourty and Slattery of Onarga, Illinois. They sold him to some farmers in N.W. Indiana for \$3,000. and they fell down on their obligation to the above Company and he came back on their hands and I bought him from the above Company for \$1,000. and he was the first horse of that breeding introduced into Douglas Co. The same men, who formerly owned him in Indiana, sent a man out to me to buy him back and I sold him to them and delivered him. He was a fine horse and left his mark in Douglas Co. and I did not like to part with him but as I was, at this time, contemplating a change in my affairs, I let him go.

I doubt if you can read this letter and my excuse is that since I had the "flu" my nerves are gone to pieces and I can't write as I used to.

I am now 82 years of age and for the past few months have not been very well -- don't get over the effects of the "flu" but hope to recover in time.

I am sorry I can't give you fuller information but what I have





Denver, Colorado  
September 1, 1929  
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written is all I can think of at present.

I am

Yours very truly,

(Signed) Wm. M. Ingersoll,

P.S.

I think the Blunt family came into the neighborhood about '65 or '66 and "Old Ben" and wife were good workers and my father sold them 50 acres in the S.W. corner of the home place and took most of the price out in work. I don't know who owns the place now.

In his slave days, he was a coachman for some prominent Southern family. The Lawrence Journal will give all details of my father's death of January, '75.













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